

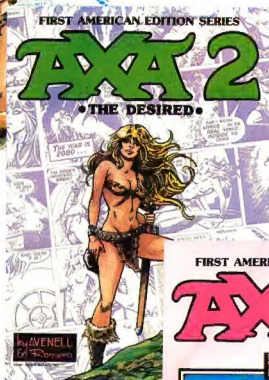
FIRST AMERICAN EDITION SERIES

AXA 4

by AVENELL
& Romero



• THE EARTHBOUND • THE TEMPTED •



Introduction by C.C. Beck

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FIRST AMERICAN EDITION SERIES

AXA 4

• THE EARTHBOUND • THE TEMPTED •



by Donne Avenell and Enrique Romero

FIRST AMERICAN EDITION SERIES (TM)

AXA "The Earthbound" and "The Tempted" ©1983 by Express Newspapers, Ltd.

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C.C. BECK

INTRODUCTION

by Bernie McCarty

The great adventure characters in the comics were instant successes worldwide. *The Phantom* newspaper strip quickly became a hit in the United States as well as in Europe. In comic books *Captain Marvel* exploded on the scene in 1940, and publications featuring him zoomed to astronomical circulation figures. The Fawcett company retired Captain Marvel in the 1950's, but England, Australia and Brazil kept right on publishing their own versions of the character.

There are two reasons for the success of such world-famous adventure characters: creative writing, which develops a personality and environment unique to the character, plus brilliant art, which amplifies the story's uniqueness in visual terms.

And now, along comes *AXA*, a British newspaper strip which has become an instant success in the United States through its appearance in the *First American Edition Series* published by Ken Pierce.

The first quality which draws attention to *AXA* is the dazzling art of Enrique Romero, creator of the magnificently endowed lead character. Combine Romero's art with the strip's two basic ingredients—a beautiful, swordwielding, liberated woman tastefully

bared and a post-holocaust science fiction setting—and *AXA* was destined for success before it had a script.

The writing? At his worst scribe Don Avenell is a solid writer, but inspired he wasn't for the first few months of the strip. Worn out sci-fi themes of nineteenth century vintage were employed. However, the appeal of Axa bouncing her way through a world gone mad quickly caught on with British readers, and Avenell subsequently began creating little literary masterpieces.

The second volume of *AXA* in the *First American Edition Series* revealed that Avenell and Romero were on the road to a classic team-up that could someday rival such famous duos as Lee Falk and Ray Moore (*The Phantom*) and Otto Binder and C. C. Beck (*Captain Marvel*). "AXA 3" was even better, and now here comes "AXA 4."

In case you came in late, let's review what has happened so far.

Axa lived in the sterile, regimented Domed City one hundred years after "The Great Contamination." The first two strips announce Axa's intention to get out, to be "free." In the third strip Axa rips her uniform open to reveal her exquisite endowments, and the story is off and running. Axa easily escapes from the Domed City and encounters the usual sci-fi fare of human and insect mutants inhabiting ruined landscapes.

Jon, a Domed City cop and Axa's first lover, is a spineless wimp who aids in her recapture and return to the Dome. Once a captive, Axa breaks loose again and survives a wild series of predicaments only to be recaptured again. Or so she thinks. Turns out the Dome Director was just testing her. "They were tests?" asks Axa. "Certainly," states the Director. "And so was your attempted seduction by that fool Jon. I am choosing you, rebel Axa, to undertake a special mission for me to the outside. Across the sea. A mission so dangerous that only a woman of your spirit could hope to fulfill it. You'll need this." And he presents her with her sword. In the

Two upcoming titles in the *First American Edition Series*.



Danielle (opposite page) © Associated Newspapers Group. Amanda (above) © Express Newspapers.

last panel of the first volume the Dome Director says, "You are free, Axa! Use your freedom well!"

Axa's male buddies, and sometimes lovers, in the first volume are spineless Jon, rugged Matt and mutant Bart, forecasting a series of relationships with men who will aid her in her surrealistic journeys. The ultimate boyfriend will be picked up in volume three: Mark Ten, the protective robot. He (it?) might even rank second only to Axa as the strip's most interesting character.

Volume two reveals that Axa's mission for the Dome Director is to act as a diplomat and to unite her own Domed City with the women-ruled Sea Dome. To reach the Sea Dome Axa must escape the Boat Men, a pirate band, web-footed surfers and reject a decadent paradise called Arkady Island where everybody is ancient except Jason, heir to the Arkady fortune. Jason and Axa become lovers and escape from Arkady together. As well as key male figures, volume two also introduces several strong willed women who are nearly Axa's equal in determination and physical charm.

Domed cities, above ground or below the sea, are not new to science fiction. But the Sea Dome in "AXA 2" is something special. Just before the holocaust this sea dome was established by a "rich heiress... a feminist." She believed in the natural superiority of women. The state of the Sea Dome's society has degenerated in a century to the point where males are little more than slaves, some of whom are required to perform the duties of prostitutes. (How can I join up?)

The arrival of Axa and Jason proves to be the catalyst that touches off a revolt in the women-ruled Sea Dome. The Sea Dome Controller, probably the smartest bitch that Axa will ever meet, wisely allows the departure of all men and women who wish to emigrate to the Domed City above ground. Her mission thus completed, and her last link with the Domed City severed, Axa takes off with Jason in tow to discover what "the future" has to offer.

The true creative strength of the Avenell-Romero

team is clearly established in "AXA 3." The first story takes place in the Valley of Mist which harbors cave dwellers, prehistoric monsters and robots, as well as a city in the swamp. Our heroine finds herself facing experimental surgery performed by a team of robots directed by the Doktor. But Mark Ten, the friendly robot, comes to the rescue, with Billi the caveman and Peter the scientist helping out. There's a brief struggle in the swamp city, but the forces of Peter (science) win out. Axa has accomplished another good deed: ending the strife between the cave and city dwellers. One very original sequence in the story involves a bit of cuddling between Axa and Mark Ten, which makes Jason jealous.

Ready to leave the swamp city, Axa asks, "Who said Mark was coming with me?" Peter replies, "He did... I plugged a special emotion factor in his circuits... affection for Axa." "Well," Axa says, "if I can love a robot, why shouldn't he love me?"

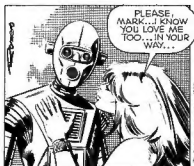
The next adventure is in the City of Hope where Axa and Jason will part company. It is now obvious that the land across the sea, referred to in the first volume by the Dome Director, is the North American continent. The City of Hope is Las Vegas in ruins with the addition of a huge arena called Nero's Palace. You can guess what is going to happen. People gamble away their freedom and get thrown to the lions. The lions in this case, however, are bulldozers and jeeps. A new boyfriend shows up: Dirk the motorcycle gladiator. He saves Axa in the most exciting chase scene of the first three volumes. Villain Nero winds up getting crushed in the arena; and Jason, who had gone into partnership with Nero, gains full control of the casino operation. Since their love has cooled anyway, Axa leaves Jason behind and heads for the "next horizon" with Dirk and the ever-faithful Mark Ten.

Our story begins...

Bernie McCarty is (among other things) the publisher of the Fawcett Collectors of America Newsletter.





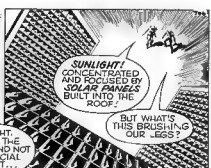




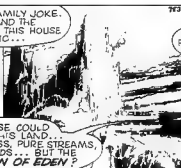
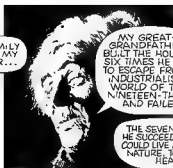














HOW DID IT HAPPEN?
THE SPOILING OF
YOUR GARDEN
OF EDEN?

THE GOVERNMENT
BUILT A LABORATORY
HERE, FOR CHEMICAL
EXPERIMENTS...
NOTHING WE COULD
DO TO STOP THEM...



TWENTY YEARS LATER, AT THE
TIME OF THE GREAT CONTAMINATION,
THE LABORATORY WAS WRECKED...
POISONOUS EFFLUENT SEEPED INTO
THE STREAMS AND SOIL...

THE GARDEN
WAS POLLUTED...
LIKE THE REST OF
THE POOR, SICK
WORLD...



BUT THE EDENS
SURVIVED...

WE HAD THIS HOUSE...
SPRING WATER FROM THE
CRAG... OUR OWN UNspoiled
GARDEN...

THEY DIED IN
THE FULLNESS
OF TIME, MY
BROTHERS... AND
LEFT ME ALONE...



STAY
WITH ME, GIRL!
DON'T LEAVE! STAY
IN SEVENTH
HEAVEN!



AXA'S A
WANDERER.
OLD
WOMAN...

SEEKING SOMETHING?
HAPPINESS, FULFILLMENT?
A HOME?



YOU HAVE
YOUR MAN,
LOVER. YOU
CALLED HIM!
THIS COULD BE
YOUR HOME!



I NEED TO
THINK... DIRK
NEEDS TO REST...
WE'LL STAY, FOR
ONE NIGHT AT
LEAST...



AXA AND DIRK SPEND THE
NIGHT IN SEVENTH HEAVEN...

IF THIS HOUSE IS
A LITTLE PARADISE,
AS I THOUGHT...
WHY CAN'T I SLEEP?



IS THE UNREST IN ME?
IN THE HOUSE? OR IN THE
DEAD WOODS AND SICK
MEADOWS OF THE
GARDEN OF EDEN?



ONLY ONE
WAY TO FIND
THE ANSWER...



I THREW MY SWORD
AWAY WHEN I ENTERED
THIS HOUSE... FOOLISHLY
AND TOO SOON...



MOONLIGHT ON
THE SECRET GARDEN
WITHIN THE HOUSE...
AND A VOICE
MURMURING...



760
"OY EDEN!
ON HER KNEES!
PRAYING."



SPIRITS OF THE
EARTH, OF FIRE,
OF WATER! HEAR ME!
STRANGERS HAVE
COME TO THE GARDEN
OF EDEN!



WORK YOUR MAGIC ON
THE GIRL, AXA. MAKE HER
LIVE OUT HER LIFE IN
SEVENTH HEAVEN,
THAT THE SCYTH OF
DEATH AND REBIRTH
BE UNBROKEN!



761
AXA? YOU
HEARD?

BUT I DIDN'T
UNDERSTAND...



WHO ARE
THESE SPIRITS
YOU WERE
PRAYING TO?

GODS OF THE
EARTH AND THE
ELEMENTS: THE
OLD GODS!



MAN TURNED
TO NEW GODS, AND
DESTROYED THE WORLD
HE LIVED IN! BUT NATURE
REMAINS, SOURCE OF
ALL LIFE TO THOSE
WHO WORSHIP HER!



STAY HERE IN SEVENTH HEAVEN,
AXA; LET ME PASS ON THE
SECRET WISDOM TO YOU,
BEFORE I DIE.

SSH...



AXA!



THERE'S SOMETHING
OUT HERE, NOT A MAN!
UNLESS THERE ARE MEN
NINE FEET TALL... AND
SLIM... IN THIS HAUNTED
GARDEN OF EDEN...



I'M
COMING, DIRK...







...AND LEFT
PART OF ITS BODY
BEHIND...

THE OLD WOMAN
SLIPPED ON THESE
STONES, RIGHT? BECAUSE
THE CREATURE THAT ROBOT
MARK LASER-GUNNED
ESCAPED THIS WAY...



WATER...
MUD...
SLIME!



DON'T LISTEN
TO HIM, GIRL!
IT WAS A **MUTANT**
THAT ATTACKED
YOU: A **HUMAN**
MUTANT!



SO WHERE WOULD
THE **MUTANTS**
HAVE COME
FROM?

I DON'T KNOW!
THEY'RE EVERY-
WHERE, AREN'T
THEY, IN THIS
DISEASED WORLD
OF OURS?



BUT THEY CAME
ONCE BEFORE TO
INFEST THE **GARDEN**
OF EDEN... MY
BROTHERS WERE
ALIVE THEN AND
DROVE THEM
AWAY...



THE **MUTANTS**
SQUATTED IN THE
DERELICT LABORATORY
OVER THERE, BEYOND THE
CORNFIELD... PERHAPS
SOME OF THEM STAYED
HIDDEN, GROTESQUELY
BREEDING...



WE COULD GO THE DERELICT
LABORATORY... CHECK IT
OUT FOR **MUTANTS**.

NO, AXA!



HAVEN'T YOU SEEN ENOUGH
OF THIS QUEER-SOME PLACE...
AND THE MONSTERS THAT
HAUNT IT?



WE'RE
LEAVING AT
DAWN; I'M
TELLING YOU!

BUT
I'M NOT
LISTENING!



NOBODY
GIVES ME
ORDERS,
DIRK!
NOT EVEN
THE MAN
I LOVE!

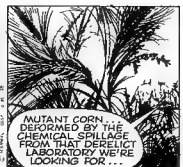
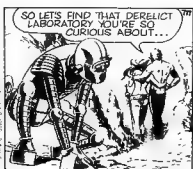


AND NOBODY STOPS ME ASKING
QUESTIONS THAT HAVE TO BE ANSWERED!
I'M GOING TO THE DERELICT LABORATORY
AT DAWN!



SO TWO HOURS LATER...

YES, BUT I'M
MORE AFRAID OF
MY OWN WEAKNESS
IF I RUN AWAY
FROM IT!
YOU KNOW
THERE'S DANGER
OUT THERE,
AXA?







WHAT IS IT?





I CAN'T... BUT MARK'S FOLLOWED US HERE TO THE LABORATORY... MAYBE HE CAN...



OH, MARK... YOU'VE SAVED MY LIFE AGAIN...



I HAVE TO HAND IT TO THAT ROBOT. HE'S ONE HELL OF AN EFFICIENT BODYGUARD!



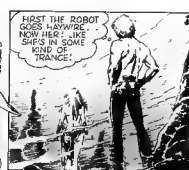
BUT NOT ANY MORE...



























SEVENTH
HEAVEN
ABLAZE...

THE HOUSE IS DOOMED.
AXA... AND SO ARE WE
UNLESS WE GET OUT,
FAST...



I HATE TO LEAVE
JOY EDEN'S BODY
THERE...



BUT PERHAPS IT'S
FITTING...THE PAGAN
SHRINE HER FUNERAL
PYRE...



LOOK OUT,
AXA!



THE WHOLE HOUSE
IS COLLAPSING!



THE BITTER END OF
SEVENTH HEAVEN...
AND THE PEOPLE WHO BUILT
THEIR DREAMS INTO IT...



MANKIND DEFILED
THE GARDEN OF
EDEN...A CENTURY
AGO...



JOY EDEN
PRAYED TO THE
ANCIENT GODS...
PAGAN SPIRITS OF
NATURE...TO RETURN
TO THEIR OLD HAUNTS
IN HER BELOVED
GARDEN...



THE SPIRITS
CAME...BUT
ONLY TO TAKE
REVENGE...



LET'S GO,
AXA...

YES, THERE'S
NOTHING FOR US
HERE...ONLY RUIN
AND DESOLATION...



BUT PERHAPS
THERE'S ANOTHER
SEVENTH HEAVEN...
ANOTHER GARDEN
OF EDEN...PURE AND
UNSOILED, BEYOND
THE HORIZON...





